DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 352 342 SP 034 201

AUTHOR Dana, Nancy Fichtman
TITLE Discovering Researcher Subjectivities, Perceptions, and Biases: A Critical Examination of Myths, Metaphors, and Meanings Inherent in University-School Collaborative Action Research Projects.
PUB DATE Nov 92
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Research on Women in Education Conference (18th, University Park, PA, November 1992).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Action Research; College School Cooperation; Educational Change; Educational Practices; Educational Researchers; Elementary Education; Elementary School Teachers; *Experimenter Characteristics; Group Behavior; *Group Dynamics; Higher Education; Interpersonal Relationship; *Leadership Styles; Metaphors; Principals; *Role Conflict; Teacher Participation
IDENTIFIERS Collaborative Research; *Expert Novice Problem Solving; *Reflection Process; Subjective Evaluation; Teacher Researcher Cooperation

ABSTRACT

This paper describes a collaborative action research project conducted by a university researcher and a group of elementary school teachers. It examines the role the researcher plays when educational change is initiated by practitioners and the nature of the relationship that develops between researcher and practitioners throughout the change process. The document focuses on the researcher as a reflective coach, on themes emerging from and inherent to university/school relationships, and on the process of challenging traditional myths (beliefs) and metaphors associated with educational research and educational researchers. The discussion centers on the myth of the researcher as expert and the ivory tower metaphor. Results suggest that reform and change may begin when university researchers, principals, and teachers form relationships that transcend traditional myths and metaphors of educational research. Such relationships are empowering and enable all members of a collaborative group to reflect critically on practices as teacher educator, principal, or teacher. Critical reflection may lead to change beginning with self-reflection, constructs of reality, and practices as educators. (Contains 20 references.) (LL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED352342

Discovering Researcher Subjectivities, Perceptions, and Biases: A Critical Examination of Myths, Metaphors, and Meanings Inherent in University-School Collaborative Action Research Projects

Nancy Fichtman Dana

The Pennsylvania State University

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

_____

_____

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

Paper presented at the 18th annual meeting of the Research on Women in Education Conference, University Park, PA, November, 1992.

SP033201

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

In August of 1990, I began a collaborative action research project with a group of elementary school teachers at Southside Elementary School. (For a full report of this research, please see Dana, 1991). My role as the university researcher was to assist teachers at Southside in articulating their visions for change and then further develop and implement their perspectives of change through the process of reflective supervision (Schön, 1988). As a reflective coach, my role was to encourage the teachers "to reflect on their classroom practices, to make explicit to themselves what they are seeing, how they interpret it, and how they might test and act on those interpretations" (Nolan, 1989, p. 35). As researcher, my role was not only to document the change process at Southside, but to document what I, as the researcher, did and learned from interactions with the teachers while in the field. Particularly, I was interested in investigating the following questions:

(1) What roles does the researcher play when educational change is initiated by practitioners?

(2) What is the nature of the relationship that develops between researcher and practitioners throughout the change process?

The themes that have emerged from my reflections on coaching reflection are the focus of this paper. Through many readings of field notes, interview transcripts, personal and dialogue journal entries, and relevant literature on change and educational research, it became apparent that challenging traditional myths and metaphors associated with educational research and educational researchers was at the essence of my relationship and my work with the teachers and principal at Southside. By critically reflecting on the myths, metaphors, and meanings embedded within the evolving nature of my relationship with the faculty at Southside, I wish to make explicit the nature of our collaboration so that others may surmount the traditional myths, metaphors and meanings inherent to university/school relationships and experience the powerful possibilities of collaborative research. For:

> ongoing critical reflection. . .is essential to important gains that are possible from addressing practitioners' concerns through staff development predicated on research-as-inquiry and on practitioner-directed change. . .Not to do so is to risk subverting critically needed efforts to work collaboratively and equitably across the boundaries that have otherwise divided educational researchers from practitioners, so well serving the former at the expense of the professional esteem and efficacy of the latter (Campell, 1988, p. 118).

Myths of Educational Research

Although the term myth may conjure images of legends, fantasy, or primitive cultures, the term myth when applied to organizations has no such connotations. Myths are an organization's network of beliefs that create certain approved courses of actions (Travers, 1987). Myths may be old ideas that impede progress (Combs, 1979), or myths may be excellent driving ideas steering an organization towards success (Travers, 1987). Whether impediments or stimulants, myths may govern the way we think about education and educational research. The danger, of course, is that an educational researcher becomes entrapped by the impeding myths that dominate their particular age, a condition described by Kuhn (1970) as entrapment in an unproductive paradigm (Travers, 1987).

In order to become a reflective coach of the teachers at Southside and enter into a collaborative research relationship with them, certain impeding myths that have dominated educational research in the past needed to be surpassed. Perhaps the most crucial myth that constrains reflective coaching and collaborative research is the myth of the expert, stated by Travers (1987) as: "There are experts in education who can provide solutions to problems" (p.

25). If teachers view the university researcher as expert, there is little chance that teacher empowerment will occur, and no chance that teacher initiated change will transpire.

I was fortunate in that one of the teachers at Southside was not entrapped in the "researcher as expert" myth. Peg was one of the teachers that initiated my work with Southside. After one of our early meetings together, I reflected on the beginnings of our relationship in my fieldnotes.[1]

> Peg again said that she appreciated me coming into her classroom and that "we are lucky to have you." I responded as follows: "What's neat is that I'm learning too." Peg answered, "That's the way it's supposed to be." I responded, "I know, but it's especially exciting when it truly happens that way." (O.C.: Peg appeared to be her usual excited and enthusiastic self. She also appears to accept the collaborative insider outsider relationship as second nature. We're learning together—it was a process we were involved in. She also feels very comfortable taking initiative and control of our conversations and directions) (Fieldnotes, October 2, 1990).

Not all the teachers in our group were as comfortable with reflection and with the blurring of the traditional roles of teachers and researchers so that they could both become learners, engaged in a collaborative endeavor. With these teachers, building trust was essential to replacing "the researcher is the expert" myth with a new "teachers are researchers; researchers are teachers; and both are collaborative learners" myth. The teachers in our collaborative group have reflected that building trust was accomplished by breaking down the traditional barriers that have separated researchers and practitioners in the past. Such actions as offering assistance in investigating areas that the researcher didn't know much about, attending each faculty meeting, having a mailbox placed in the school right along side the faculty for easy communication, joining the faculty at social engagements, and behaving in meetings as a catalyst served to build trust, and allowed me to move from an outsider to an insider at Southside, negating the myth of the expert. According to McDonald (1989):

> Outsiders who have the right attitude play a role that is interpretive and catalytic, and they play it with patience. They help find answers but never provide them; they help shape outcomes but never determine them. Their efforts are powerful only insofar as they spur efforts by the true insiders—efforts that are necessarily tortuous and messy (p. 207).

Examples of my behaviors as catalyst are evident in my fieldnotes and journal entries. For instance, unlike Peg, Helen knew she wanted to make some changes, but was uncertain of exactly what she wanted to change and in what ways someone from the university could help her. During my first day of participant observation in Helen's classroom on September 25, 1990, Helen mentioned that she was struggling with holistic approaches to assessment, and in fact, was a member of a committee to investigate and make changes in traditional report cards. I stated that I did not know very much about alternative assessment and perhaps we could investigate this together.

---

[1]When taking fieldnotes, I used the methodology of Bogdan and Bicklen (1982) who separate the descriptive part of fieldnotes, ("objective records of what has occurred in the field"), from the reflective part of fieldnotes, ("the more subjective side of the researcher's journey" emphasizing "speculation, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches, impressions and prejudices"), through the use of parentheses and the notation of "O.C." which stands for *observer's comments* (see Bogdan & Bicklen, 1982, pp. 73-92). Although the customary practice in "writing up ethnography" is to take the observer's comments out of the fieldnote accounts and incorporate them directly into the portion of text that precedes, interprets, and introduces a selected section of fieldnotes, I have left my fieldnotes in "raw form" throughout this paper in order to make explicit my reflection on relationship-building with the teachers at Southside as they were occurring.

On October 2, 1990, I returned for a follow up meeting with Helen, stating that I did some research since last week and selected a few articles to share. I reflected in my fieldnotes:

> I began by offering Helen the articles on assessment. I told her that since she had been interested in assessment from our last meeting that I did some research and selected these papers, not knowing if they would be of help or not. (O.C.: Her facial expressions were indicative of interest and appreciation). After I briefly summarized each article, Helen commented that these articles were great because they were having a grade level meeting tomorrow about assessment, so this came at a perfect time. . .As time was close to when she needed to pick up her students from music, we began to wind down our meeting. As we walked out of the classroom and into the hall, I stated that I hoped the articles helped. We turned to go in different directions. As we backed away from each other, talking over our shoulders, she responded, "Oh, I think it's right on target. I'm going to make copies for everyone." (O.C.: I felt that our relationship deepened at that moment. She appeared appreciative of the articles and the fact that I "did research" to collect them. I was not offering "answers" but the beginnings of a "search" for answers. I believe Helen felt that she was important, and that we truly would learn together. This is an essential aspect of a collaborative research undertaking) (Fieldnotes, October 2, 1990).

Helen facilitated her grade level assessment meeting and became a member of a county wide assessment committee. She began to offer me articles and examples of alternative approaches to assessment and report cards that she found through her work on these committees and her own research. Assessment became the first subject of our reflections together.

Building trust and a collaborative relationship with the initial teachers in our research group was not always so easily accomplished. For example, the language Sally used in our conversations together was often filled with references to "the researcher is the expert" myth. At the beginning of our work together, Sally stated, "I'd like you to come in and tell me what I'm doing right and what I'm doing wrong" (fieldnotes, September 20, 1990). I knew this myth would constrain the building of a collaborative research relationship and possibilities of engaging in reflective practice. On September 25, 1990, I noted:

> At 10:15 a.m., I proceeded to Sally's room. Sally's room was alive with the chatter and activity of 27 kindergartners. (O.C.: Some background—I have been reflecting on how I could approach Sally. From her last comment—"I'd like you to come in and tell me what I'm doing right and what I'm doing wrong," she did view me as an outside "expert researcher." I decided that I'd just "drop in" as she had asked and maybe make some observations of the environment in fieldnote form, and then share these fieldnotes with Sally and perhaps she could develop a question she would like to address) (Fieldnotes, September 25, 1990).

I hoped that in making an observation where I did not "tell her what was right and what was wrong," but instead reflected the activity of her classroom, she would begin to view me not as an "expert," but a reflective coach. On October 4, we met to discuss my fieldnotes of her classroom:

> I arrived at Southside at 2:30 p.m. and went straight to Sally's room as we had planned to talk about my observation during kindergarten "nap time" from 2:30 to 2:45. I arrived in a dark room where each child was laying on a mat. I tiptoed over to Sally and she greeted me with a smile. We sat on the floor in a storage closet for our meeting. . .As our time was short, I opened my fieldnote book and told Sally that what I tried to do was "capture one moment" in her classroom. I proceeded to share with her what was happening in her classroom at 10:35 a.m. that Tuesday. When I reported that "Brad" was crawling on the floor, she commented, "That's that kind of thing I want to know,. . .because when Ted

> (the principal) observes he never tells you the bad things, only the good things" (Fieldnotes, October 4, 1990).

Although I had just reported Brad's actions as one activity that was happening as I scanned the room, Sally interpreted my report in the evaluative terms of a "researcher as expert." Therefore, as the year proceeded, Sally and I were unable to enter into collaborative research on her classroom practices.

Sally did, however, remain a part of our research group and actively engaged in the group's research focus of changing the school culture to one of collegiality. I believe it was through the collaborative role I played during our group meetings as well as personal conversations Sally and I had following these meetings that the myths of educational research began to become visible. It was these myths that became the focus of our reflections.

For example, on January 16, 1991, our research group met with the objective of forming small heterogeneous grade level groups who would meet during a portion of the faculty meetings to share teaching ideas and discuss professional issues. Following this meeting, I reflected in my own personal journal:

> On this day, the teachers and I laughed and joked together. I was an observer as they formed each group. I truly felt a part of our research group for the first time, rather than someone who had come in from outside "their four walls."
>
> When groups were being made, Pam commented "I would like Nancy to be in a group with teachers that she hasn't talked with yet." Everyone agreed and asked me to tell them who I hadn't talked with yet. There was a clear feeling of "we are now a collaborative group, working together to try and break through the walls that separated each classroom teacher into isolation and severely constrained our collective visions of change."
>
> Following this meeting, Sally and I chatted about my study at Southside. She spoke of an interest in pursuing a doctorate. As I spoke more about my excitement in pursuing my degree and my work at Southside, Sally questioned me more about my research. She had never thought of research in such a way before—previously she thought research could only be numbers (Personal Journal Entry, January 16, 1991).

Sally's comments regarding "research as numbers" was a reference to another myth stated by Travers (1987) as "Sophisticated statistical methods convert studies into scientific studies" (p. 21). Sally's view that the only legitimate approach to educational research was quantitative inquiry perpetuated the myth of the "researcher is the expert who can solve problems." To Sally, researchers had mastered special techniques of inquiry, different than the way teachers think about their practices. By reflecting on these myths, Sally and I entered into a different sort of collaboration. The nature of our collaboration was to cope with the existing myths about educational research and to begin to develop new, and more useful myths. This was not only accomplished through our conversations about the nature of research but through additional dialogues of personal aspects of our lives, separate from our lives at Southside. These personal dialogues broke down the invisible barriers between researcher and practitioner that were created and sustained by the traditional myths of educational research, and enabled us to negotiate "the meanings through which [our] self in relation to other selves and to [our] cultural communities [at the school and the university was] constituted" (Witherell & Noddings, 1991, p. 7). On January 16, 1991, I reflected in my journal:

> Sally and I spoke for quite some time this afternoon, about some personal aspects of our lives for the first time. I felt a growing trust building. The walls that previously had

separated the researcher and the practitioner were crumbling, only small pieces remained (Personal Journal Entry, January 16, 1991).

In January, additional signs that I was becoming an insider member of our research group at Southside rather than an outsider from the university were evident through my inclusion in social activities occurring outside of Southside. Peg and Helen invited me to join them for lunch on a teacher planning day, Sally invited me to a 40th Birthday Party for a faculty member at a local restaurant, Pam and Kit invited me to join them for their afternoon 3 mile walks, and Kit invited me to her wedding. The teachers and I had not only built the trusting relationship needed to engage in collaborative research and reflective practice, but began to build lasting friendships as well. These friendships were grounded in our readings and writings in our dialogue journals, engaging in dialogue with one another, and the tellings and receivings of our own stories which enabled us to "discover connections between self and other, penetrate barriers to understanding, and come to know more deeply the meanings of [our] own historical and cultural narratives (Witherell, 1991, p. 94). Thus, the foundation needed in order to engage in critical reflection was in place.

Building on that trust was additionally accomplished by my high visibility, particularly my attendance at each faculty meeting, evidenced by the principal's reflection in a December interview:

> I think you are sincerely interested in Southside and the children. If you're not then you've done a good job of fooling me. I really think that about you and that's why I think a lot of you and what you are doing. I mean, you show up at faculty meetings. I know you don't have to do that, and it tells me that you obviously want to be here and you really want to find out about the innerworkings of Southside. That's a good way to do it, and it really tells me that you are serious about what you are saying (Ted interview, December 4, 1990).

Building trust with the principal offered additional possibilities for becoming a collaborator rather than an expert. The principal joined our research group, and we began to meet bi-weekly to engage in reflection on his practices (Dana & Pitts, in press). The principal became a key informant for me to triangulate my aforementioned recorded observations of collaborative relationship building with the teachers at Southside. He would often reflect on the "University as Ivory Tower" or "Crystal Palace" metaphor, and how our collaborative work offered a refreshing alternative to the traditional inservice workshops offered by "Ivory Tower Experts."

Beyond The Ivory Tower Metaphor

According to Lakoff & Johnson (1980), metaphor "is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action" (p. 3). Just as myths may govern the way we think about education and educational research, metaphors may "govern our everyday functioning,. . .what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 3). As such, how teachers related to me at Southside was very much influenced by metaphor. At one of our first meetings in December, the principal spoke of his own and his teachers' negative perceptions of university personnel through "the expert from the ivory tower" metaphor:

> There are a lot of subgroups [of teachers] out there. . .Those that have been teaching a long time have obviously probably been to many more workshops where someone from a university stands up and says this is going to be the end all and the answer to all your questions and concerns. And then they stand up, and I know you have talked about this and said I don't want to work with you this way. But they stand up and say this is how you should teach your students in the classroom and they model just the opposite. . .And then the workshop ends and we get back into the pressures of day in and day out, new kids coming in, new kids leaving, large classes, whatever, and we soon forget that workshop and then we realize that workshop did me no good at all. And then it's time for another

> workshop that is going to be the end all. So after a while, [teachers start to divide into groups]. And there's one group out there that says we're not interested, you know, forget it. We've been through this 10 times. It's worthless. It's a waste of our time, plus we have all these things that we have to do. You've got another group, I'm guessing in the middle that says well, convince us that this is going to be different. And then you've got another group that says we sure hope this is going to be different. We're willing to give it a chance (Ted, Interview Transcription, December 21, 1990).

I reflected that the teachers I have been working with were probably in that last group, and that many other teachers at Southside probably perceived me through the "expert from the ivory tower" metaphor. I stated that I hoped that gradually other teachers at Southside would discover that the "ivory tower" metaphor "didn't have to be." Ted agreed, stating "We're going to have to assume that everybody is from Missouri and we're going to have to show them" (Ted, Interview Transcription, December 21, 1990).

Towards the end on the school year in March, Ted reflected that indeed we were "showing them:"

> Obviously the group you've been working with is real positive about you and it's fun for me to see that somebody can come from the university and not be threatening to teachers or even more so, to now be brought into the fold and say, you're one of us. You know, they don't look at you like she's in that crystal palace over there, and it's your whole approach . . .I sure hope that we can [continue our research] one more year because while that may not be able to do everything you and I might hope to do, one more year would sure get us a lot closer. Because I think that we could gently find ways for these people you've been working with to emerge in leadership roles, and some of the things that we've tried to do this year, they are starting to bubble up to really, really begin to take hold. And then, get an additional group start to pull in. And I see a year from now, I get excited when I think where we could be a year from now (Ted interview, March 8, 1991).

At our next interview Ted greeted me with news he referred to as "very exciting:"

> There's a teacher you need to see while you're here. We were talking yesterday,. . .and he said that because of some changes in his life, it's caused him to look at his work, and his philosophy at work. . . he's been working off of a lot of different philosophies, and all of the sudden he realizes that he never really had his own philosophy of teaching and how his learning environment is set up and why, that whole thing. What he wants to do now is get it all sorted out. . .He said he's real interested now in learning more about constructivism. He's been talking to some other teachers about it. He wants to do a lot of reading over the summer. He's ready for some materials and books and I've told him that perhaps you could be the link to help him with that. And Bob laughed and he said, you know, when Nancy was here, I knew who she was, and I had an idea of what she was going to do, but he said I still wasn't real quick to want to work with her. And he said, it was almost like pulling your underwear drawer out, is the way he described it, and I was just a little. . . reluctant to do that. But he said, now I think I'm ready to talk with her. He said because what I'm hearing around from other teachers, you see, (this is what I told you), what I'm hearing around is the way Nancy works with you is she comes in and she just observes. She just sits and talks with you and she just kind of helps you hear what you are saying, what you're thinking, and just, the whole way that she works with you is not threatening at all. And I was kind of thinking that it might be threatening. And you see, what's happened is that he's talked with other people, and it's neat (Ted Interview, March 21, 1991).

I did chat with Bob, recommended Fosnot's (1989) Enquiring Minds, Enquiring Learners: A Constructivist Approach For Teaching, and offered some of my writing to him to read if he wished

to do so. He expressed interest in beginning to work with me over the summer, and joining our research group for the 1991-1992 school year.

Just as Ted had predicted, our initial research group was growing. Three additional faculty members also expressed interest and began attending our meetings. Furthermore, Helen reflected that with less than two weeks left to the school year:

> I have people now, that are just now realizing that you're in this school and they want to know why you are here. Because they just tuned it out in the beginning of the year and they weren't interested. But because you are still around and they see people working with you and they see things going on, and I've shared some of the things with them. . .(Group Meeting, May 30, 1991).

Many teachers became inquisitive because I had not "retreated to the ivory tower" but was still around at the end of the year. For these teachers, it took the passing of an entire school year to begin to look at me through a different metaphor of "collaborator," and even "faculty member." At the last faculty meeting of the year, one teacher even handed me a voting ballot, assuming that I was allowed to vote on faculty issues.

Helen continued reflecting on the possibilities of involving other faculty who were just now beginning to express interest in our work:

> So I think it's important that whether we're going to be able to work with you or not next year that we continue some type of group meeting once a month or something and that we each bring in at least one more person. . .Each of us find one person to come in and double the size of this group to come in and talk about changes and talk about things and to continue this process (Group meeting, May 30, 1991).

It became clear to me through Helen's interest in continuing our group work even if circumstances prevented me from continuing to be a member of the group that the myths and metaphors of educational research had been transcended. This is teacher empowerment. This is one goal of reflective practice:

> In a collaborative self-study, a Hall of Mirrors unfolds. The researcher wants to conduct with her partner a collaborative inquiry into the ways of thinking, knowing, and understanding implicit in their patterns of action. She intends, at least in part, to help them learn to conduct this sort of inquiry for themselves; she must therefore be able to live out with them what she wants them to learn to do. She is personally on the line in a special way (Schön, 1991, p. 355-356).

New Meanings: My Personal Story of Change

As the "expert from the ivory tower metaphor" would not be abandoned if the university researcher did not document and critically reflect on how she, herself, has changed from engagement in reflective practice, in this section, I detail my personal journey through engagement in reflective practice and university-school collaboration. Schön (1991) states that such personal reflections are a necessary component of the researchers' "paradoxical stance:"

> Abandoning the expert role of spectator/manipulator, the researcher presents himself to his subjects as a person who seeks to enter into their experience of practice. He says to them, in effect, "I join you, I try to put myself in your shoes, I try to experience what you are experiencing . . ." This takes time. Many [case studies of reflective practice] are the product of researchers who have been willing to stay with social situations long enough, delving into them deeply enough, to get just such a feeling for their subjects' experience.

> But as the researcher asks his subjects to make themselves vulnerable to him, so he must make himself vulnerable to them [and] at the same time, the researcher must recognize that there are limits to reciprocal empathy and vulnerability. . .The researcher must try to make her own understandings problematic to herself (p. 356).

My own critical reflections on reflective practice began in January when I had been in the field long enough to begin to delve deeply into the reflective hall of mirrors with the teachers and principal at Southside. In trying to replace the researcher as expert metaphor with a researcher as collaborative learner metaphor, I found myself struggling with the issue of my own voice. Additionally, from engagement in collaborative research through reflection-in and -on practice with the teachers and principal at Southside, as well as my own reflections on my understandings, I learned that I, too, was partially trapped to some extent by the educational research myths and metaphors that have dominated my field:

> This morning, I reread Creating Spaces and Finding Voices by Janet Miller. I'm continually struggling with the issue of voice and how I will present my data and analysis of this study. I was so moved by Miller's use of her own voice, the rich writing and description, I decided on this day to begin writing a journal that would be much more personal than my fieldnote accounts. Perhaps I'll share some of these entries with the teachers at Southside. So anyway. . .here goes.
>
> I now realize that I too, was not "immune" to the myth of the researcher, despite all the reading I had been doing. I had not yet seen the value of me keeping my own personal journal [separate from my fieldnote accounts] to chronicle my thoughts as my research proceeds. I also found I was avoiding coming right out and stating that I was an object of study in my own research. I knew this was an integral part of my study, yet why had I not stated it? Perhaps I avoided directly stating this as I, too, was struggling with the myths, metaphors, and meanings that traditionally perpetuated the social realities of the researcher's role (Personal Journal Entry, January 16, 1991).

Travers (1987) states that as university researchers, we can "make ourselves aware of the extent to which we are the hostages of ideas, and we can struggle to escape and achieve a new intellectual freedom" (p. 25). I found that my journal writing provided a space to articulate my struggles. In this way, my personal journal, as well as the dialogue journals I kept with the teachers, became a powerful tool to "make my own understandings problematic" to myself as well as "subject them to the test of [my] collaborators' backtalk" (Schön, 1991, p. 356). For example, on January 4, 1991, I wrote in Kit's journal:

> Here's something that will be pretty weird for you, I think—it's a transcript of our first formal interview together. 17 pages! It took me a while to transcribe, but as I was transcribing, I found some interesting things, so I thought I'd [make this the topic of] this journal entry to you. You may want to comment on this in your journal entry.
>
> Orange highlighting has to do with creating a "norm of collegiality" or sharing at Southside. . .Pink highlighting has to do with you as a "questioner." You appear not to be someone who will not just accept "the way things are—the norms, the myths, etc.". . . Green has to do specifically with assessment. You seem to be frustrated. . .There's a lot here, and I don't want it to overwhelm you. . .What are your general reactions to the transcript? Were the things I picked out correct? (Kit's journal, January 4, 1991).

What I had not anticipated was Kit's turbulent reaction to reading her own words. Kit responded on February 5, 1991:

> I finished reading the transcript. . .Throughout the transcript I said "frustrated." I really didn't realize how frustrated I was until I read my own words. . .I can't figure out what I'm doing wrong. I feel like it is all my fault but I know it really can't be. Why am I doubting myself? (Kit, Journal Entry, February 5, 1991).

Furthermore, what I had not anticipated was my reaction to Kit's feelings of turmoil. I responded to Kit:

> What's so strange, Kit, something that I didn't count on, is that I'm feeling a lot of turmoil because of your last journal entry. I think that reflection will be difficult for me also, and yet it is exciting at the same time—all part of the process (Kit's journal, February 7, 1991).

Through our reflections, we had made ourselves vulnerable to each other. Although the preceding sections of this chapter have dealt with the importance of the teachers' trust in the researcher, I learned that in order to coach reflection, I needed to trust the teachers in the same ways they needed to trust me. At times, our reflections would create personal turmoil. I needed to trust that this was a necessary part of the change process (Red & Shainline, 1987) and that the turmoil created would not discourage the teachers from continuing to engage in our research. I needed to trust that it was appropriate for me to be the catalyst of turmoil, and to be immersed in turmoil myself at various times during our research. I needed to trust that it was acceptable to say to the teachers, "I am with you, I am one of you, and I allow myself to be confused when you are confused, which sometimes takes very little effort" (Schön, 1991, p. 356). I needed to trust that in sharing my interpretations with the teachers and principal at Southside, that I would not offend them, as Barth (1990) reminds us:

> The scholar who checks findings with school people risks offending teachers [and] principals. . .whose perceptions of reality are invariably violated by the researcher's account—any account. [Yet] the researcher who does not convey findings to the adults in the school risks joining the tainted cadre of outsiders who take advantage of schools for their own professional purposes and run, leaving behind little benefit to the school in return for the precious energies that practitioners have invested in the study (p. 87).

An additional aspect of reflective coaching that I had not anticipated was that through the process of becoming a reflective coach of the teachers, they became a reflective coach of my practice as a teacher educator. This coaching was unintentional on their part, but as I engaged in discussions with these teachers about their practices and continued to do more readings on such topics as myths, metaphors, reflective practice, critical education theory, and constructivism, I could not help but reflect more critically on my own teaching at the university. As I was preparing a course syllabus for a social studies teaching and learning course I was to instruct in the summer, I reflected in my journal:

> As I've watched these teachers I have learned a tremendous amount also. Something I was not expecting was that I too will change and grow in my teaching at the university.
>
> As I begin to think about designing my course syllabus for the summer, I have reflected on my teaching. What I realize now is that although I advocate such practices as cooperative learning, inquiry lessons, and "problem solving" centers, much of my teaching of these topics is still embedded in direct instruction. I am caught in an old paradigm and caught in "hanging on while letting go."
>
> I've been doing some brainstorming about possible ways to climb out of the old paradigm. I'm going to set my first class up in centers. I'll ask teachers at Southside for ideas and help. I will also not "tell students" what makes a good unit as I've done in the

> past, but let students discover for themselves. It's scary embarking on significant changes in my practice, but exciting at the same time (Personal Journal Entry, April 25, 1991).

The following unforseen revelation that other collaborative actions researchers such as McElroy (1990) have discovered became apparent to me:

> To our surprise, as we look at our experience in the action research project and wonder how it is that we have occasioned the examination of our own professional life as well as our participants, we realize that it is impossible to ask another to be critically reflective without being so oneself. . .the difficulty is that in telling our stories, we come to know ourselves in a deeper way. The armoring carefully constructed over decades is eroded, broken down, and we are left to confront ourselves (p. 211 -212).[2]

I further learned the importance of not only reflecting deeply on my practice as a teacher educator, but to make that reflection explicit to the teachers I was working with at Southside, as well as the students I was instructing. Kelsay (1991) states:

> At the same time we, as teacher educators, are assisting classroom teachers to become teacher-researchers, we ourselves must assume the teacher-researcher role. We need to function within the "teacher as learner" metaphor--always observing, always listening, always analyzing—to most effectively facilitate the process for the teachers with whom we are working.

By making my reflection explicit, I was able to further facilitate the process of reflection at Southside, both for the teachers and for myself. For example, on May 9, 1991, I wrote in Kit's journal:

> Thanks so much for the materials—I think my class went well Tuesday night. . .Thanks to you, I think I'm really improving my college teaching. . .and it's from working with you (Kit's Journal, May 9, 1991).

Kit responded:

> It is exciting to know that I inspired you!. . .I have some interesting thoughts [about change]. Change is supposed to turn our lives into chaos for a while, but I don't see it that way. . .I feel change is necessary for "survival." If we don't make changes, we get bored and aggravated with our present situation. What do you think about this? (Kit's Journal, May 9, 1991).

As I began to make my reflection on my college teaching explicit, the teachers began to make reflective coaching explicit by asking me questions in the same ways that I had asked them questions about their classroom practices and the culture of the school. Our relationship now developed into a kind of reciprocity, described by McElroy (1990) as "not perfectly balanced, which might imply an equilibrium throughout the time. Instead, it [is a relationship] where each of us took total responsibility for [ourselves] and the relationship, each alone, living collectively. Further, balance would imply a static state and this relationship [is] forever shifting" (p. 212).

---

[2]In McElroy's article, this quote was written in the singular to reflect the nature of his personal relationship with his "subject." As McElroy's words perfectly captured the nature of my relationships with the teachers at Southside, I have slightly edited McElroy's text by changing the singular pronouns of "I" and "my" to "we" and "our."

Implications And Conclusions

As I continue the process of reflection both as a researcher and as an instructor at the University, I have come to realize that it is not only my relationships with my collaborative teacher researchers that will remain forever unbalanced and shifting, but the total experiences of my work and my life as a teacher, as a researcher, as a teacher educator, and as a person. For:

> to take the reflective turn is not only to "give practitioners reason" but to recognize that any particular account of their reasoning is an observer's construction that may be mistaken or radically incomplete. The researcher who would "give reason" has as obligation to turn his thought back on itself, to become aware of his own underlying stories, to search out possible sources of blindness and bias in his own ways of making sense of the reality he has observed . . . . The researcher must recognize. . .that there is no given, preobjectified state of affairs waiting to be uncovered through inquiry. All research findings are someone's constructions of reality. And yet the researcher must strive to test her constructions in the situation by bringing to the surface, juxtaposing, and discriminating among alternate accounts of that reality (Schön, 1991, p. 357).

Through my journal writings, my dialogues with the teachers at Southside, and the writing of this paper, I continue to test my constructions, turn my thoughts back on themselves, become aware of my own underlying stories, and search out possible sources of blindness that are in part caused by the myths and metaphors dominating educational thought and research. The process of reflection itself, then, causes one's constructions of reality to remain "forever shifting," for the processes of reflective practice and collaborative action research call for constructions of realities to continually be questioned, redefined, reconceptualized, and finally, reconstructed. McElroy (1990) likens this process to the process of becoming human, "arduous" and "even painful at times" (p. 213).

During the times when my reflections have been painful and changes I have made have created turmoil, I found myself wishing for someone to study me, to become my reflective coach. I envisioned a group of teacher educators engaging in reflective practice and collaborative action research with one another. This, I believe, is a powerful possibility for future research, with a powerful potential for teacher education reform.

Additionally, I found myself worrying that as schools and universities collaborate and school and university personnel both become researchers and teachers reflecting in and on practice, new stresses will be placed on the individuals who enter into what Lampert (1991) describes as "boundary blurring roles." Both I and the teachers and principal at Southside felt these stresses at one time or another during our collaboration. For example, Helen once described the new roles she was taking on as "wearing too many hats." Ted once wrote in his journal "I'm sorry, I have more to say but I've used my time." I found myself and my work at Southside becoming suspect to some of my peers at the University, for as I described my work and sounded my ideas with others, it was not unusual for them to question me with an intonation of disbelief: "Yes, your participants talked about change, but did they *really* change their actions?"

Barth (1990) describes this crossing of boundaries as a roadblock to rich interaction between the worlds of school and university. He states "the education profession has made membership in its two major wings all but mutually exclusive" (p. 106). Furthermore, Barth contends that "a citizen in one is suspect in the other," and "one who tries to be a citizen in both can be suspect in both" (p. 106). Crossing boundaries and becoming "suspect" in our own school and university cultures created stresses for me, the teachers, and the principal at Southside. Here lies a potential pitfall of university-school collaboration:

> . . .Establishing cooperative relationships will accomplish at one level the goal of "restructuring" institutions. But these institutional reorganizations will not erase the tensions that have always existed between research and practice, between teaching as a profession and formal teacher education, and between researchers and teacher educators. These tensions will simply move from the institutional level to the level of the individuals who are trying to fill the boundary-blurring roles that restructured institutions create. All of the problems that we have not solved at the institutional level will arise again in the lives and work of those who are attempting to blur the boundaries of conventional roles. . .If our new vision of school/university relations is to be sustained, we will need to find ways to help individuals create relationships between heretofore conflicting forces (Lampert, 1991, p. 674).

The nature of the boundary blurring roles entered into by both teachers and university researchers is an important additional area for further investigation and research.

In conclusion, I have learned that reform and change may begin when university researchers, principals, and teachers form relationships that transcend the traditional myths and metaphors of educational research. Such relationships are empowering and enabled all members of our collaborative group to reflect critically on their practices as either teacher educator, principal, or teacher. In turn, critical reflection may lead to change. Reform does not begin "one rung on the ladder below the reformer" (Barth, 1990, p. 70). Rather, reform begins with our reflections on ourselves, our constructions of reality, and our practices as educators.

References

Barth, R. S. (1990). Improving schools from within: Teachers, parents, and principals can make a difference. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (1982). Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Campbell, D. R. (1988). Collaboration and contradiction in a research and staff-development project. Teachers College Record, 90(1), 99-121.

Combs, A. W. (1979). Myths in education. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.

Dana, N. F. (1991). Four walls with a future: Changing educational practices through collaborative action research. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL.

Dana, N. F. & Pitts, J. H. (in press). The use of metaphor and reflective coaching in the exploration of principal thinking: A case study of principal change. Educational Administration Quarterly.

Fosnot, C. T. (1989). Enquiring teachers, enquiring learners: A constructivist approach for teaching. New York: Teachers College Press.

Kelsay, K. L. (1991). When experience is the best teacher: The teacher as researcher. Action in Teacher Education. 13(1), 14-21.

Kuhn, T. (1970). The structure of scientific revolutions (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. (1980). Metaphors we live by. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Lampert, M. (1991). Looking at restructuring from within a restructured role. Phi Delta Kappan, 72(9), 670-674.

McDonald, J. P. (1989). When outsiders try to change schools from the inside. Phi Delta Kappan, 71(3), 206-212.

McElroy, L. (1990). Becoming real: An ethic at the heart of action research. Theory Into Practice, 29(3), 209-213.

Nolan, J. F. (1989). Can supervisory practice embrace Schön's view of reflective supervision? Journal of Curriculum and Supervision, 5(1), 35-40.

Red, C. & Shainline, E. (1987). Teachers reflect on change. Educational Leadership, 46(3), 38-40.

Schön, D. (1988). Coaching reflective teaching. In P. P. Grimmett & G P. Erickson (Eds.), Reflection in teacher education. New York: Teachers College Press.

Schön, D. A. (Ed.). (1991). The reflective turn: Case studies in and on educational practice. New York: Teachers College Press.

Travers, R. M. W. (1987). Myths, scripts, and educational research. Journal of Research and Development in Education, 20(3), 15-26.

Witherell, C. (1991). The self in narrative: A journey into paradox. In C. Witherell & N. Noddings (Eds.), Stories lives tell: Narrative and dialogue in education (pp. 83-95). New York: Teachers College Press.

Witherell, C. & Noddings, N. (Eds.). (1991). Stories lives tell: Narrative and dialogue in education. New York: Teachers College Press.